

Parashat Nitzavim

Deuteronomy 29:9-30:20

SEPTEMBER 11, 2020



SUMMARY

In this Torah portion, every Israelite gathers to hear more of Moshe's closing words. They are told that they all have a share in G!d's *breet* or contract. Once again they are warned of the consequences for not observing the mitzvot, but they are also told that G!d will accept anyone who sincerely wants to and tries to do better.

Towards the end of this *parasha* Moshe offers the Israelites words of encouragement, saying that *teshuvah*--understanding and following the instructions we find in *Torah* is not beyond the abilities of our brains or our bodies. Moshe reminds the Israelites that the words of *Torah* are in their mouths and in their hearts. Even if we might see that understanding *Torah* or living according to the mitzvot in *Torah* can be challenging, it is within our reach.

Moshe then tells the Israelites that, although G!d is bringing them to them the Promised Land, they will only be able to continue to live there if they listen to G!d's instruction and be careful that their hearts do not turn to false gods. Moshe calls heaven and earth to see that G!d is putting the choices of life and death, blessing and curse before the Israelites. Moshe then gives the Israelites the tip, "Choose life so that you and your children may live."

From Our Commentators:

SEFORNO:

לא רחוקה היא שתצטרך
לחבמי הדור הרחוקים שיפרשו
לך באופן שתוכל לעשותה אפי'
בעודך בגלות ובאר זה באמרו
לא בשמים היא לאמר. לא
יקרה לך בענין התשובה
שתצטרך בה להגדת נביא:

It (the *mitzvah* of making *teshuvah*) is not distant so that you have to ask the leading Torah scholars of your generation who live a long way from you to explain how to observe this commandment. You can easily observe this commandment even in the Diaspora where you may not have any Torah scholars nearby.

For Discussion:

- 1) In this week's *parasha*, G*d once again reminds the Israelites not to turn to false G*ds. What do you think this might mean and why might it be important to G*d that the Israelites not rely on other gods?
- 2) This week's Torah portion also teaches us that *teshuvah*--turning towards living a life based on Torah--is not difficult. But aren't there 613 *mitzvot*? Don't you think it might be challenging to live according to all of these *mitzvot*? So why do you think Moshe would want to tell the Israelites that choosing to follow the Torah is possible and not too difficult for them?
- 3) After telling the Israelites that choosing to live a life guided by Torah does not have to be difficult, Moshe says, "This thing is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart." What do you think Moshe might mean that living a life informed by Torah is in our mouths and in our hearts?